

Norwood-Dingell bill sends the wrong message to the American people, and the wrong messengers to the conference committee.

The Norwood-Dingell Patients' Bill of Rights legislation is the only patient protections bill in this Congress that has received strong bipartisan support. Yet, out of the 13 Republican members appointed as conferees, only one voted for this legislation, and only one voted in favor of yesterday's successful motion in the House that instructed conferees to insist on including the provisions of the Norwood-Dingell bill.

It is clear that the public longs for us to reach across party lines to address issues of national concern. There are few matters that are more important than enacting a strong Patients Bill of Rights. In this regard, I am asking you to use your authority under the House rules to expand the conference committee to include members who accurately reflect the will of the House.

We need to make certain that the results of this conference will be in the public interest; as currently constituted, this committee is weighted heavily in favor of the special interests that oppose this bill. Over the years, we have worked together on drafting and passing bipartisan health care legislation, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. I hope we can build on that record so that this Congress can respond to the public's need for patients' protections as our nation's health care delivery system undergoes change.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Radio Remarks on Expansion of a Wildlife Refuge To Protect the Salmon Habitat in the Columbia River

November 5, 1999

Today I announced the expansion of a wildlife refuge to protect the prime salmon habitat along the Columbia River. This supports our treaty with Canada to protect Pacific Coast salmon.

My budget proposes increases for salmon restoration, but Congress has provided only a fraction of the resources necessary to do the job. So, again, I call on Congress to provide the necessary resources to support this treaty and to work with me on a budget process that observes our obligations and protects and preserves our environment.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded approximately at 12:15 p.m. at the Hermitage Tomato Cooperative Association in Hermitage, Arkansas. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Statement on Funding for the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill

November 5, 1999

I am pleased that we have reached an agreement with congressional leaders on a budget that will permit America to advance its most critical priorities around the world. This agreement meets our commitments to the Middle East peace process, funds our efforts to safeguard nuclear weapons and expertise in the former Soviet Union, makes an initial investment in debt relief for impoverished countries, including in Africa and Latin America, and allows us to do our part in bringing stability and democracy to southeast Europe. I hope this marks the start of a bipartisan effort to ensure that America has not only the will but the resources to lead.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Disaster Assistance and Relocation Funding for States Struck by Hurricane Floyd

November 5, 1999

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)

When Hurricane Floyd swept through the Mid-Atlantic region, it left in its wake a wide path of destruction and despair. Since that time, my Administration has been working closely with all of the affected States to ensure that Federal disaster assistance programs are used to the maximum extent possible to support residents as they repair and rebuild their communities and their lives.

An important element in this rebuilding process will be mitigating against a repetition of such widespread destruction. An unprecedented number of the homes destroyed—11,000 in North Carolina alone—were in flood plains and therefore remain vulnerable to future floods. To address this most pressing need, I am asking the Congress to approve the use of \$429 million of the contingent disaster relief funds recently appropriated to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to buy out many of these homes and relocate them to safer, higher ground.

During my visit to eastern North Carolina after Hurricane Floyd, I was profoundly moved by the resolve of the citizens of the region to recover from this incredible devastation. To support the long-term efforts of people in every affected community to reconstruct their homes, businesses, and infrastructure, assistance from the Federal Government must be responsive and prompt. Federal disaster relief programs already have provided more than \$600 million to help individuals and communities recover from the effect of Hurricane Floyd. Among other things, Federal assistance has provided temporary housing and shelter, disaster unemployment benefits, debris removal, funds to repair and reconstruct public infrastructure, and loans to rebuild homes and businesses. My Administration will continue to work with the States and with the Congress to assess remaining needs and provide further assistance.

The recent appropriation of \$2.5 billion for FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund will allow those working on the ground to continue to respond quickly and effectively. I urge the Congress now to provide both the funding that I have requested for the Small Business Administration's disaster loan program, and the additional \$500 million that I have requested, and for which my Administration will provide budgetary offsets, to provide for the unmet needs of farmers and ranchers. Together, these funds will ensure that the Federal Government continues to provide needed disaster assistance in a timely manner.

I know the rebuilding process will not be easy, but as I saw on my trip to North Carolina, the true spirit of America remains evi-

dent, with people from all backgrounds coming together when times are tough. Let us do our part and authorize the necessary funding to support the hard work being done to rebuild all of the States affected by recent disasters.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

NOTE: Letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives; Richard A. Gephardt, House minority leader; Trent Lott, Senate majority leader; and Thomas A. Daschle, Senate minority leader. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

October 30

In the morning, the President and Hillary Clinton traveled to Providence, RI, to attend the funeral service for Senator John H. Chafee, and in the evening, they returned to Washington, DC.

October 31

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Oslo, Norway, arriving the following morning.

November 1

In the morning, the President attended an arrival ceremony and later met with King Harald V of Norway in the King's Office at the Royal Palace.

In the afternoon, the President met with Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel in the Holmenkollen Room II at the Radisson Plaza Hotel.

In the evening, the President attended a memorial dinner honoring Yitzhak Rabin in the Grand Ballroom at the Royal Palace.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael G. Rossmann and Daniel